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SNIE 80-61  
7 December 1961  
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SPECIAL  
NATIONAL INTELLIGENCE ESTIMATE  
NUMBER 80-61

SECURITY CONDITIONS IN CARACAS AND BOGOTA

Submitted by the  
DIRECTOR OF CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE

The following intelligence organizations participated in the preparation of this estimate: The Central Intelligence Agency and the intelligence organizations of the Departments of State, Defense, the Army, the Navy, the Air Force, and The Joint Staff.

Concurred in by the  
UNITED STATES INTELLIGENCE BOARD

on 7 December. Concurring were The Director of Intelligence and Research, Department of State; The Director, Defense Intelligence Agency; the Assistant Chief of Staff for Intelligence, Department of the Army; the Assistant Chief of Naval Operations (Intelligence), Department of the Navy; the Assistant Chief of Staff, Intelligence, USAF; the Director for Intelligence, Joint Staff; and the Director of the National Security Agency. The Atomic Energy Commission Representative to the USIB, and the Assistant Director, Federal Bureau of Investigation, abstained, the subject being outside of their jurisdiction.

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CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY

7 December 1961

SUBJECT: SNIE 80-61: SECURITY CONDITIONS IN CARACAS AND BOGOTA

#### THE PROBLEM

To estimate the likelihood of incidents which would endanger or embarrass the President during his forthcoming visits to Caracas and Bogota.

#### THE ESTIMATE

##### General

1. The governments of Venezuela and Colombia are vitally interested in the success of the President's visit, they will be alert to protect him from danger or embarrassment, and they have forces at their disposal adequate to maintain general control of the situation. Nevertheless, there are elements in both countries eager to create the appearance of popular antagonism toward the US and popular rejection of the Alliance for Progress, and at the same time to discredit their own governments. These elements will almost certainly take advantage of the occasion to stage some sort of hostile demonstration. The nature and effect of these efforts will depend in large measure on the immediate circumstances and the manner in which the security forces deal with the occasion.

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2. The object of most hostile efforts would almost certainly be to subject the President and his party to personal indignity rather than to physical injury, but some risk of the latter is inherent in the circumstances. There is, of course, a possibility of an assassination attempt by some fanatic individual or small group.

Caracas

3. The circumstances of the President's visit to Caracas are radically different from those which prevailed at the time of the Nixon incident. Then most Venezuelans strongly resented the favor which the US had shown toward the recently deposed Perez Jimenez dictatorship, and those elements which undertook to demonstrate this resentment enjoyed the favor and encouragement of the interim government. There is good reason to believe that the government deliberately exposed Mr. Nixon to indignity, though it probably did not expect the situation to get so far out of hand.

4. In contrast, the success of the President's visit is of vital importance to the Betancourt government, which is alert to the danger of hostile demonstrations and is taking extraordinary security precautions to prevent or control them. Elite National Guard and regular military units will be employed for this purpose. The government, however, is not popular in Caracas, where the Communists and other extreme leftist elements have control of student organizations and the capability of organizing large

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popular demonstrations, as well as considerable capabilities for terroristic action. Furthermore, there is always the possibility that rightist extremists will attempt to create an incident which would discredit the Betancourt government in US eyes. On past occasions the government has demonstrated its will and ability to curb disorder and control the general situation, but it has not been able to prevent occasional violent disturbances.

5. The situation in Caracas could be adversely affected by developments in the Dominican Republic, particularly if it could be made to appear that the US was supporting the restoration of military dictatorship there.

6. Local US capabilities to provide warning of planned hostile actions are good. We have evidence to indicate that Communist plans are designed primarily to tie up traffic and discourage the attendance of favorably disposed Venezuelans and that instructions have been given not to make any attempt on the President's life. The probability is that the security forces deployed for the occasion will be able to protect the President and control the general situation. Even so, some disturbance is almost certain to occur. In any event, the amount of force deployed to protect the President could itself become the source of some embarrassment.

#### Bogota

7. The circumstances in Bogota also are radically different from those that prevailed at the time of the Bogotazo in 1948. Then the country,

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under the arbitrary rule of an unpopular government, was in a state of incipient civil war. The Bogotazo was primarily sparked by local passions which had no relation to the coincident meeting of the OAS.

8. In contrast, President Lleras Camargo is generally popular and the threat is limited to the capabilities of the Communists and other extremist splinter groups to foment disorder in hope of creating the appearance of a popular repudiation of the President and the Alliance for Progress. This theme will not have much popular appeal in Bogota, but the Communists do have a controlling influence in student organizations and some labor unions. Local US capabilities to provide warning of the specific hostile plans of those groups likely to cause trouble are fair to good.

9. As in Caracas, the government is vitally interested in the success of the President's visit, is alert to the danger of hostile demonstrations, and will take extraordinary security precautions to prevent or control them. The forces at its disposal should be sufficient to protect the President and control the general situation. There can be no guarantee, however, against the possibility of an untoward incident.

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